

Statement of Rationale
SOC-200 GE Certification for
Justice, Reconciliation and Diversity on Biblical and Theological Grounds

Certification Criteria

Students will be able to:

1. develop biblically and theologically grounded understandings of justice, reconciliation, and diversity. These will enable students to understand justice and reconciliation in terms of the gospel and appropriate disciplinary frameworks, recognize sin, rebellion, and brokenness as such, and discern their responsibility in the work of justice and reconciliation within their own local context;

This certification criteria will be met primarily through several readings that use explicit biblical and theological language and tools. Some lecture material will also engage biblical/theological responses, even when the reading content is not specifically biblical or theological. In the case of Stark (below), his discussion of pagan/Christian relations in the early church clearly demonstrates a normative case for sacrificial giving on behalf of the “other” as a profound Christian virtue.

- Edmondson & Brennan, “Faithful Antiracists Have Wisdom”
- Edmondson & Brennan, “Faithful Antiracists Apply the Bible”
- Stark, “Epidemics, Networks, and Conversion”
- Squires and Lathrop, *How Neighborhoods Make Us Sick*

Students will respond to the first three readings in journal form, helping them identify and interact with key biblical and theological principles. The fourth reading (full book) will require a response paper. The final exam will include time to reflect on/examine how religious commitments and affiliations relate to health. The class session on race/ethnicity will specifically engage biblical and theological tools as we discuss Edmondson & Brennan.

2. examine personal actions, social norms, and systemic practices involving race and racism in the United States as they relate to historic and contemporary patterns of belonging and exclusion, attending to how historical particularities and differences in power shape the responsibilities different parties have in the work of justice and reconciliation in light of God’s kingdom;

This certification criteria will be met with readings and lectures that focus more specifically on disciplinary tools, although some will incorporate biblical and theological reflection. The first two class sessions establish a sociological frame for understanding the relationship between the individual and social institutions, which sets students up to engage in productive conversation about race and ethnicity (e.g., historical factors, systems, power, culture, etc.). One full class session is dedicated to the discussion of race and ethnicity, though race/ethnicity also figures prominently into several other class sections/topics, including phenomenology, stigma, social capital, education, class, and global health. Related readings include:

- Carel, “Phenomenology and its Application in Medicine”
- Link & Phelan, “Conceptualizing Stigma”
- Mirowsky & Ross, *Education, Social Status & Health*
- Desmond & Emirbayer, “What is Racial Domination?”
- Barr, “Why does Race/Ethnicity affect the Way Physicians Treat Patients?”
- Farmer, “Colonial Medicine and Its Legacies”

Students will respond to these readings in journal form and will be assessed via the final exam essay prompt.

3. model Christ-like dialogue reflecting God’s desire for justice and reconciled relationships among all image-bearers, especially when confronting challenging or sensitive issues.

The following text on classroom behavior expectations has been added to the syllabus:

Classroom behavior: Some topics of discussion we will engage in are highly contentious (e.g., race). In order to have productive and meaningful conversations, it is essential that all class members ask themselves (and one another) what it means to engage in conversation marked by love and mutual respect...even when different viewpoints are taken. I ask that all students attempt, when appropriate, to set aside their own interpretive lens and activate their “sociological imagination” in order to see things from a different perspective. Ultimately, just as God reconciles us to himself through Christ, we ought to be reconciled with one another. That doesn’t mean we always come to the same conclusion, but it does involve a legitimate attempt to listen and see from another angle. Jesus set this example when he “became like us” (Hebrews 4:15).

A theme throughout our course will be learning and practicing ways to honor one another with our words and attitudes as co-image bearers of God. As this course covers not only inequalities experienced racially—but also according to economic position and gender—a key theme is God’s desire for justice and reconciled relationships among individuals, but also as a reality embedded in the practices and norms of institutional structures. An intrinsic function of this course is to help students better understand their own place in the world and to encourage the practice of honoring those different from themselves.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will analyze issues of justice and injustice involving race and racism in the United States in biblically and theologically grounded ways.

2. Students will identify Christian responsibilities to pursue justice and reconciliation in diverse relationships, practices, and structures according to the character of God’s loving reign expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

In addition to these two learning outcomes, specific to JRD, the SOC-200 course learning outcomes (below) are aligned with the intent of the JRD.

1. Develop an understanding of foundational concepts, perspectives, and theories in

- the field of sociology as they relate to the fields of nursing and public health.
2. Display reflective and critical thinking skills regarding health in contemporary society.
 3. Demonstrate acquisition of sociological insight by applying course topics to a health inequity research project.

The course learning outcomes capitalize on several specific strengths of the sociological enterprise, including:

- theoretical tools;
- conceptions of personhood, socialization, and culture;
- emphasis on power, oppression, and marginalization;
- relationship between individual and social structures/institutions;
- and centrality of personal conviction and ethical responsibility.